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Report Highlights:
This report gives an overview of the situation for genetically engineered products with regard to regulation, policy, and the marketing environment in Norway.

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SECTION I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While Norway is not a member of the European Union (EU), it is a member of the European Economic Agreement (EEA). Consequently, Norway has implemented EU legislation with regard to biotech feed, seed and food.

Through adaptation of the EEA agreement, Norway has authority to reject any EU-approved biotech product that does not meet the requirements of Norwegian domestic legislation. Only four genetically engineered (GE) products have actually received approval for marketing in Norway -- one line of tobacco and three lines of carnations.

While there is no general ban on genetically modified organisms (GMO) products in Norway, there is no commercial production of biotech crops in Norway and no GM products are imported into the country.

This report provides an overview of the situation for genetically engineered products with regard to regulation, policy, and the marketing environment in Norway.

SECTION II. BIOTECHNOLOGY TRADE AND PRODUCTION

The United States was a major supplier of soybeans to the Norwegian crushing industry through 1996 – the year herbicide-tolerant GE soybeans were commercially introduced in the United States. U.S. soybean imports have since dropped to zero due to the food and feed industry's reluctance to accept products of genetic engineering.

SECTION III. BIOTECHNOLOGY POLICY

Regulatory Framework

Responsibility for the monitoring and enforcement of laws and regulations on biotech in Norway is divided between the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Health. The Directorate for Nature Management is the authority responsible for feed and seed; the Norwegian Food Safety Authority is responsible for biotech food.

While Norway is not a member of the European Union (EU), it is a member of the European Economic Agreement (EEA). Consequently, Norway has implemented EU legislation with regard to biotech feed, seed and food. The primary Norwegian legislation on GE– the Gene Technology Act of 1993 – is, however, more restrictive then EU legislation in the sense that it also lays down requirements that GM products should be ethically justified and provide societal benefits as well as be in line with sustainable development.

Through the adaptation of the EEA agreement, Norway has the authority to reject any EU-approved biotech product that does not meet the requirements of Norwegian domestic legislation.

Norwegian regulations related to the approval process for products of agricultural biotechnology were first established under the Gene Technology Act of 1993. Since 1999, additional regulations have been stipulated in the Norwegian Food Law. Applications for GM approval are submitted to the Norwegian Food Authority, which evaluates the application and assesses conformity with Norwegian legislation. This requirement also includes products already approved for free release in the EU's internal market.

Approved Biotech Crops

As mentioned above, even if a product has been authorized for sale and distribution in the EU and thereby in principle within EEA countries, Norwegian authorities may decide to reject the GE product in Norway if it does not meet the requirements of the Gene Technology Act. While the EU directive allows consideration of health and environmental issues, the Norwegian Act also allows consideration of ethical issues, sustainable development and socially justifiable use of GM products. This difference in the assessment of products of bioengineering for licensing has led to Norway's rejection of several GM products approved in the EU. Only four GE products have actually received approval for marketing in Norway -- one line of tobacco and three lines of carnations.

Field Testing of Biotech Crops

Norway does allow for field testing of biotech crops. However, since 1999, the Norwegian government has only approved one application for field trial – the European aspen.

Co-existence

There are no Norwegian regulations currently established for co-existence of GM crops with conventional or organic production. The Norwegian Food Safety Authority is currently drafting proposed regulations for the prevention of adventitious contamination of GMO-free products with biotech products. The proposal will include compensation for producers who detect GM material in conventional and organic products.

Labeling

On April 18, 2004, the EU implemented Regulation 1829/2003 on Genetically Modified Food and Feed and Regulation 1830/2003 on Traceability and Labeling of Genetically Modified Organisms and the Traceability of Food and Feed Products produced from Genetically Modified Organisms. These polices were integrated into Norwegian regulations in September 2005.

While the revised Norwegian regulations incorporated the major elements of the EU regulations, they do not represent a formal or complete implementation of EU directives. All food and feed produced from GE, including products that no longer contain detectable traces of GMOs, must be labeled. The allowable adventitious presence level is set at 0.9 percent for EU approved GMOs and 0.5 percent for products that have not yet been approved but have successfully completed an EU or Norwegian risk assessment. All products testing above these levels must be labeled.

The regulation does not require labeling of products that are not food ingredients, such as processing aids. Meat, milk or eggs obtained from animals fed with GM feed or treated with GM medicinal products do not require GM labeling.

Cartagena Biosafety Protocol

Norway is a signatory to the Cartagena Biosafety Protocol. The Cartagena Protocol is implemented in Norway through several legislative measures applicable to the production and use of products of biotechnology in Norway, including transport, import and marketing.

Biotech-related Trade Barriers

As mentioned above, Norwegian legislation on GMOs is highly integrated with EU legislation. While Norwegian/EU legislation provides the primary and basic rules for the regulation, approval and labeling of biotech products, the complexity of this legislation effectively prohibits U.S. exports to Norway.

SECTION IV. MARKETING ISSUES

While questions and issues related to biotech food and feed products are perceived as controversial within the Norwegian marketplace, the absence of discussion is much more striking than its presence. Discussion is mainly taking place within small sectors of Norwegian society, including certain members of the scientific community and various government agencies.

The Norwegian food retail sector is comprised of four main players. None of these major retailers has much incentive to take the lead in introducing genetically engineered products into the Norwegian marketplace -- if there were ever to be any GE food products approved in the future. This stems from two main factors: (1) consumer reaction is perceived to be critical and (2) media reaction is also perceived to be predominantly negative.

In order for the sale of a genetically modified product to be successful, these anticipated negative responses would have to be offset by either a significantly lower price for the same quality good and/or evidence of greater sustainability, social benefit and ethical development.

SECTION V. CAPACITY BUILDING AND OUTREACH

Related Reports from FAS Stockholm 2004-2006

Report Number	Title	Date Released
NO5002	Norway to Focus on Non-GM Soybeans from Brazil	01/25/05
NO4004	Biotechnology in Food and Agriculture	11/01/04